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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed the ability of 31 advanced students of English as a Second Language (ESL) to monitor their own use of article and verb errors in their compositions. Subjects were 31 foreign graduate students enrolled in an advanced composition course at Iowa State University. The two categories of grammatical errors were monitored in three successive steps: (1) immediately after production and without prompting; (2) one class meeting after production; and (3) two class meetings after production, with prompting. Data were drawn from students' initial and final compositions. Students were encouraged to correct their compositions (monitoring), but were not given teacher corrections until the third monitoring session. Results indicate that 25% of verb errors and 15% of article errors were detected and corrected without teacher prompting. About half of unprompted monitoring occurred immediately after production. Article errors were monitored accurately more frequently than were verb errors, and both kinds of correction were more accurate when unprompted. About 80% were able to make at least one unprompted correction. Subjects using the monitoring procedure throughout the semester showed a decrease in verb errors but not article errors. (MSE)

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The Self-Monitoring of Articles and Verbs in ESL Written Production

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This paper presents the results of a study analyzing the ability of 31 advanced ESL students to self-monitor article and verb errors in their compositions. These two categories of grammatical errors were monitored in three successive steps: immediately after production and without prompting (that is, no indication of the error was given); one class meeting after production, also without prompting; and two class meetings after production, with prompting. The specific research questions were: (a) How frequently can article and verb errors be monitored without prompting? (b) How does a time lag between production and monitoring affect error detection? (c) How accurate are the monitorings? (d) How much do ESL learners vary in their monitoring ability? (e) Can monitoring practice lead to a decrease in errors?

Although it is quite well-known that some adults learn a second language better than others, it is not so well-known why this is so. Several researchers, including Rubin (1975), Stern (1975), and Bialystock (1981) have suggested that one factor is the ability to self-monitor: good language learners analyze the content and form of their output before, during, and after production. The constant interaction between the good language learners' creative and critical faculties may be responsible for their better internalization of the language system. The conscious application of pedagogical rules allows the good language learners to check, either before or after production, the accuracy of their language. With frequent incorrect items, this

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repeated focus may help lead to the automatic use of correct forms and improved language proficiency.[1]

Because of its possible importance in improving language proficiency, self-monitoring is a skill that all ESL learners are encouraged to develop. To help them develop this skill when writing, instructors often use an error correction technique that involves both guided learning and problem solving. Students are guided in making their own corrections by their instructors' having located and coded the errors. The students, in turn, must solve the problem of deciding what the correction should be. Learning is enhanced because students are active participants in the correction process: either they are reminded to apply a forgotten rule or they become aware of a rule not known.

Although ESL learners are encouraged to monitor their written production, little has been ascertained about their ability to do so. Most monitoring studies have dealt with oral production (Krashen & Pon, 1975; Schlue, 1977; White, 1977; Houck, Robertson, & Krashen, 1978; Fathman, 1980). Given the differences between written and spoken language, we cannot assume that monitoring in one mode is comparable to that in the other. To date, only a few studies have focused on the monitoring of written production. Hatch (1979) cites one such study, Hassan (1978), which analyzed the changes ESL learners made on second and third drafts of compositions. Hassan found that learners made few grammatical changes and instead focused on such content aspects as vocabulary choice and the addition of details. Two other studies indicate that unskilled ESL writers focus prematurely on form while making revisions. Zamel (1983), in her study of the composing processes of six advanced

[1]Explicit knowledge of the pedagogical rules is not a requirement during monitoring. Learners often correct "by feel" (that is, by what "sounds right") and are not able to verbalize the rules they are using (Stafford and Covitt, 1978; Seliger, 1979). At the same time, monitoring does have limitations. It is limited to the simpler grammatical rules (for example, inflections, simple order changes, etc.). It should also be restricted to situations where it does not interfere with communication, as in writing or prepared speech (Krashen, 1984).

ESL learners, noted that one unskilled ESL writer was "distracted by local problems" and seldom made changes that affected meaning. Raimes (1985) also observed that her unskilled ESL writers did not view editing as just a "clean-up" operation but instead edited for grammatical errors during the composing process. There appears to be a need for further research in this area, particularly with regard to the ability of learners to monitor their own grammatical errors.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This paper presents the results of a small-scale, preliminary investigation into the ability of advanced ESL learners to correct grammatical errors in their written production. Focused on in this investigation was the monitoring of article and verb errors.[2] The specific research questions were :

1. How frequently can article and verb errors be monitored without prompting, that is, by the learner alone, without the teacher's intervention?
2. How does a time lag between production and monitoring affect error detection?
3. How accurate are the monitorings?
4. How much do ESL learners vary in their monitoring ability?
5. Can monitoring practice lead to a decrease in errors?

The first question concerns the ease of monitoring article and main verb errors in written production. To what extent are ESL learners able to correct such errors on their own, without prompting by the instructor?

Articles and verbs were investigated for two reasons. First, most ESL learners have difficulty with them, thus ensuring

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[2] The decision to focus on article and verb errors was made before the data were collected. During the monitoring sessions, however, the students were told to monitor for all grammatical errors in order to determine the emphasis they give to various types of grammatical errors while monitoring.

The verb errors analyzed were limited to those in verb phrases which include a finite verb.

an ample number of errors for monitoring. Second, articles and verbs differ in "rule learnability," (Krashen, 1982), which is determined by relative simplicity of form and use. Article usage involves rules that are simple in form but very complex in use (Hawkins, 1978). Verb usage involves rules that vary in simplicity: some, such as subject-verb agreement, are relatively simple; others, such as tense selection, are more complex.

The second question probes the role of a time lag in the ease of monitoring. It may be that, while some article and verb errors are detectable immediately, others can be recognized only when there is a break between production and monitoring. While writing, learners must focus on both content and form. To monitor for grammatical errors, they must then "switch gears" and focus only on form. A time lag might help learners separate these two aspects of their writing.

The third question deals with the accuracy of monitoring. We need to know not only the frequency of the unprompted corrections but also their accuracy. How accurate are ESL learners when correcting article and main verb usage on their own? We also need to examine the accuracy of the prompted corrections in order to determine the difficulty learners have in making corrections once they have been located and coded.

The fourth question examines variation in monitoring frequency among ESL learners. Of interest here is the degree of individual variation: are only a few ESL learners able to monitor article and main verb errors successfully without prompting?

The fifth question investigates the effect of monitoring practice over time. Can such practice lead to a reduction in errors? It is hypothesized that the repeated analysis of errors involving "learnable" rules will lead to internalization of correct rules, resulting in greater accuracy over time.

METHOD

Subjects

Subjects were 31 foreign students enrolled in two sections of an advanced, sixteen-week composition course for foreign graduate students at Iowa State University. All subjects had a

score of more than 500 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The native languages of the subjects were Chinese (10), Korean (9), Spanish (4), Arabic (2), Indonesian (2), Japanese (2), Hebrew (1), and Malay (1). The language groups were about equally represented in both sections. The sections were taught by the same instructor, Barbara Schwarte, and used the same syllabus and materials.

Data elicitation

Data for the study were collected from the initial and final compositions written by each of the 31 subjects. The topic of the compositions was the same for all subjects at both times: "Changes I would like to see made in my country." In neither session did the subjects know beforehand what the topic would be. In both sessions, the subjects had 30 minutes in which to write their compositions.

Monitoring procedure

The monitoring took place in three sessions: the first a few minutes after the composition was written, the next two during the next two class meetings.

The first monitoring session was separated from the composing time only by a short break, during which the subjects put their compositions in folders and rested a few minutes. They were not allowed to look at their compositions during this short break. Then the subjects were given until the end of the class meeting (about ten minutes) to make corrections in their compositions, the only stipulation being that new content (that is, new sentences or paragraphs) not be added. They were instructed not to erase an error but simply to indicate the correct form in the line above it. No help in correcting the errors was given. The subjects worked individually and were not allowed to use dictionaries or other references.

In the second monitoring session, during the next class meeting (two days later), subjects were again given the opportunity to correct errors in the compositions they had written during the first session. Subjects were told to read

through their compositions and make additional corrections. They took fifteen minutes to do this second monitoring.

After the second monitoring period, the instructor went through each composition and located and coded various grammatical errors, including those under investigation. Corrections were indicated using a set of correction symbols familiar to the students. The symbols both located errors and coded them according to type (for example, wrong tense, improper deletion, etc.). Errors miscorrected during the first two monitoring sessions were also marked.

During the third monitoring session (at the next class meeting, two days after the second session), the subjects were given 50 minutes to correct the errors that had been indicated by the instructor.

After the third monitoring session, the instructor collected the compositions and checked the accuracy of the subjects' corrections.

In addition to the sessions outlined above, the monitoring procedure also involved the tabulation of errors. When the compositions were returned after the third monitoring session, the subjects made a list of their errors, grouped according to type (for example, wrong tense, improper article deletion, etc.). They also indicated the corrections and, if possible, gave explanations for them. The completed tally sheets were collected and the explanations corrected by the instructor. The tally sheets were later returned to the subjects so that they received feedback on the adequacy of their explanations.

The effectiveness of the monitoring procedure as a teaching technique was determined by having the 15 subjects in one section, the monitor group, use it with six additional in-class compositions. The 16 subjects in the other section, the nonmonitor group, used the procedure only with the initial and final compositions. For all subjects, article and verb accuracy on the initial composition was compared with that on the final composition to see if those subjects using the monitoring procedure throughout the semester would have a greater reduction in errors over time.

Comparing initial and final compositions to determine the monitoring procedure's effectiveness is not without its limitations. Most importantly, the two writing tasks may not be comparable measures. Whereas objective pretests and posttests are comparable because they can be the same or very similar, free writing tasks, even when on the same topic, may not be. Differences in performance over time, with regard to error frequency and type, may be due to subjects' having attempted more challenging or just different structures and not to changes in their language proficiency. This methodological weakness should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the first four questions, data from the two writing sessions (initial and final) and from the two sections (the monitor group and the nonmonitor group) are combined. Differences between the two writing performances and the two groups are identified during discussion of the fifth question.

Totals of 1,751 articles and 1,205 verbs were analyzed. The error analysis included not only incorrect forms but also those that should have been produced but were not (that is, improper deletions[3]) and those that were produced and should not have been (that is, improper insertions). Of the articles, 1,513 were correct, leaving 238 in need of monitoring. Of the verbs, 186 required monitoring. Eighteen of the main verbs contained two errors, making the total number of main verb errors 204. The correctness percentages for both grammatical items were quite high--86% for articles and 84% for verbs--indicating that neither item proved especially difficult for subjects to control.

An error analysis was done to determine the frequency of different types of article and verb errors. Article errors included improper deletion, improper insertion, and wrong

[3] Because deletions were included, it is in fact more accurate to say that the study examined article *sites* and verb *sites*. For simplicity, however, the shorter terms *article* and *verb* will be used.

choice of article. Verb errors included subject-verb disagreement, wrong tense, wrong lexical choice, wrong form, improper deletion, and improper insertion. (An example of each type is presented in the appendix.) Errors not falling neatly into the categories were discussed and judgment calls made. Forms occurring in garbled sentences were not included in the analysis.

Results for question 1: Frequency of unprompted monitoring

How frequently were article and verb errors monitored without prompting? Table 1 presents the number of articles and verbs monitored during each of the three monitoring sessions.

Table 1

Number of article and Main Verb Errors Monitored

	Articles		Main verbs	
	number	percentage	number	percentage
Monitoring Session 1 (immediate, unprompted)	19	8.0	25	12.3
Monitoring Session 2 (delayed, unprompted)	16	6.7	25	12.3
Monitoring Session 3 (further delayed, prompted)	168	70.6	118	57.8
Other	35	14.7	36	17.6
Total	238		204	

*The category "other" refers to errors that were unintentionally overlooked by the instructor when locating and coding the errors or whose indication eliminated the need for correction, as in the case of improper insertion.

Thirty-five of the 238 article errors and 50 of the 204 verb errors were monitored without prompting (that is, during the first and second monitoring sessions). The percentage of verb errors corrected without assistance was about 10% higher than that for article errors (15% for articles versus 25% for verbs). To put it another way, a higher percentage of article errors had to

be pointed out by the instructor before the students could correct them. Although not especially high, the percentages indicate that unprompted monitoring can take place for both types of grammatical errors.

Table 2 indicates the ease of detecting errors for different article and verb error types. For articles, all three error types were quite similar in monitoring ease (that is, one error type was not easier to detect than another). Interestingly, monitoring

Table 2

Monitoring Ease of Article and Main Verb Error Types

	Number of errors	Number of errors monitored without prompting*	Percentage of errors monitored without prompting
Articles			
Improper deletion	120	18	15%
Improper insertion	93	13	14%
Wrong choice	25	4	16%
Total	238	35	
Main verbs			
Wrong tense	79	17	22%
S-V disagreement	50	19	38%
Wrong lexical choice	45	4	9%
Improper deletion	13	4	31%
Wrong form	12	5	42%
Improper insertion	5	1	20%
Total	204	50	

*The monitorings done during Monitoring Session 1 and Monitoring Session 2 have been combined.

frequency was not related to error frequency. Although deletion accounted for half of the article errors, it did not have a higher monitoring rate. For verbs, form errors, which were few in number, were the easiest to monitor. This is not surprising, since form errors can usually be corrected through reference to conceptually easy rules. Subject-verb agreement errors were also fairly easy to detect, indicating that although difficult to control (50 of the 204 verb errors were of this type), they were not difficult to monitor. Tense and lexical choice errors were difficult both to avoid and to detect: they were frequently made and infrequently monitored. The low monitoring rate for lexical choice errors is surprising since both Schlue (1977) and Hassan (1978) found that vocabulary selection was of primary concern when their students monitored. This may have been due to the fact that the subjects were told not to change content. They may have thought that changing lexical choice was a content change.

Results for question 2: The effect of a time lag

How did a time lag between production and monitoring affect error detection? For both articles and verbs, about the same percentage of errors was monitored during the first and second sessions (see Table 1). The time lag was helpful. Some errors could be monitored without it, others could not. Although it may be suggested that the errors monitored in the second session were those that subjects did not have time to monitor in the first, this did not appear to be the case. Most subjects turned in their compositions before the end of the first monitoring session. It would be interesting to see if even more monitoring could have been done if the second session had occurred after a time lag of a week or more.

Results for question 3: Monitoring accuracy

How accurate were the monitorings? Table 3 presents data on the accuracy of the unprompted and prompted monitorings. For articles, all of the 35 unprompted monitorings were correct. The prompted article monitorings were not so accurate, but the percentage was still quite high. One explanation for the high

accuracy of the prompted article monitorings is the formal simplicity of article usage. Subjects had a good chance of making accurate corrections since there is a limited number of article choices.

The monitorings for verbs were less accurate than those for articles. Like those for articles, however, the unprompted monitorings were accurate more frequently than the prompted ones. This may indicate that the subjects found first those errors that were the easiest to correct. The only errors left for prompting were the harder ones to correct. Once a verb error was prompted, subjects had little difficulty figuring out its correction: over three-fourths of the prompted verb monitorings were accurate. This indicates that errors were probably due to the nonapplication of a known rule and not to unfamiliarity with the rule. It would be interesting to see if this accuracy decreases with proficiency level. An analysis of the incorrect prompted verb monitorings reveals that the aspects most difficult to monitor accurately were tense and lexical choice: for each about a third of the monitorings were correct. This is not surprising since both of these aspects involve less "learnable" rules.

Table 3

Accuracy of the Monitorings

	Unprompted monitoring sessions			Prompted monitoring sessions		
	# correct	#incorrect	%correct	#correct	#incorrect	% correct
Articles	35	0	100	149	19	89
Main verbs	42	8	84	116	34	77

Results for question 4: Variation in monitoring ability

How much did learners vary in their monitoring ability? Table 4 presents the unprompted monitoring rates of individual subjects. Only six subjects did no article or verb monitoring on

Table 4

Number of Unprompted Monitorings by Individual Subjects

*M - Number of unprompted monitorings, *E - Number of errors.
Monitor group: subjects 1-15, nonmonitor group: subjects 16-31.

	Articles						Main Verbs					
	Time 1		Time 2		Total		Time 1		Time 2		Total	
	*M	*E	*M	*E	*M/*E	%	*M	*E	*M	*E	*M/*E	%
Subject												
1	0	2	0	2	0/4	0	0	5	0	2	0/7	0
2	1	6	1	3	2/9	22	1	1	3	5	4/6	67
3	0	6	0	3	0/9	0	0	9	0	0	0/9	0
4	0	7	1	4	1/11	9	1	3	0	0	1/3	33
5	0	6	0	1	0/7	0	1	1	1	4	2/5	40
6	0	3	1	2	1/5	20	1	1	2	4	3/5	60
7	1	2	4	8	5/10	50	1	3	2	4	3/7	43
8	0	3	0	8	0/11	0	0	3	0	3	0/6	0
9	1	4	0	6	1/10	10	0	1	0	1	0/2	0
10	0	3	2	4	2/7	29	1	4	1	4	2/8	25
11	0	1	1	7	1/8	13	0	8	0	3	0/11	0
12	0	2	1	4	1/6	17	2	8	0	5	2/13	15
13	0	1	0	2	0/3	0	0	1	1	4	1/5	20
14	0	2	1	3	1/5	20	0	3	0	0	0/3	0
15	0	3	0	3	0/6	0	0	2	0	1	0/3	0
16	3	7	0	5	3/12	25	4	4	1	5	5/9	56
17	0	1	1	5	1/6	17	2	3	2	4	4/7	57
18	0	6	1	5	1/11	9	0	3	0	1	0/4	0
19	3	8	2	2	5/10	50	1	1	0	2	1/3	33
20	0	0	0	4	0/4	0	0	2	1	7	1/9	11

[Table 4, continued]

	Articles						Main Verbs					
	Time 1		Time 2		Total		Time 1		Time 2		Total	
	*M	*E	*M	*E	*M/*E	%	*M	*E	*M	*E	*M/*E	%
Subject												
21	0	9	3	10	3/19	16	4	8	0	3	4/11	36
22	0	3	0	4	0/7	0	0	1	0	1	0/2	0
23	1	6	0	6	1/12	8	1	4	0	1	1/5	20
24	0	2	0	9	0/11	0	1	1	5	9	6/10	60
25	0	1	0	4	0/5	0	0	1	2	2	2/3	67
26	3	8	0	2	3/10	30	1	9	1	2	2/11	18
27	0	0	0	0	0/0	0	0	3	0	1	0/4	0
28	0	1	0	2	0/3	0	1	3	0	2	1/5	20
29	1	2	1	6	2/8	25	1	5	0	3	1/8	13
30	1	2	0	1	1/3	33	2	2	1	7	3/9	33
31	0	3	0	3	0/6	0	0	4	1	7	1/11	9

either the initial or final composition. Eighteen made at least one article correction, and 21 made at least one verb correction. The highest number of monitorings per subject on a composition was about the same for both grammatical items. One subject made four article corrections; another made five verb corrections. No one subject was responsible for a major portion of the unprompted monitorings of either articles or verbs; the majority of subjects were able to make a few unprompted monitorings.

Because of the high proportion of Chinese and Korean subjects in the study, the monitorings of these two groups were compared. A comparison of the monitoring frequencies presented in Table 5 indicates that there was indeed a difference for verbs. This difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.004$). One explanation for the difference is found in the types of errors made by each group: the Korean subjects made more

subject-verb agreement errors whereas the Chinese subjects made more tense errors. The Koreans may have monitored more because their types of errors made it easier to do so.

Table 5

A Comparison of Unprompted Monitorings by Chinese and Korean Subjects

	Articles			Verbs		
	#monitored	#errors	%monitored	#monitored	#errors	%monitored
Chinese (N=10)	12	78	15.4	11	79	14.0
Korean (N=9)	13	80	16.3	25	58	43.0

Results for question 5: The effect of monitoring practice

Did monitoring practice lead to a decrease in errors? As stated earlier, subjects in one section, the monitor group, used the monitoring procedure with six other in-class compositions, while subjects in the other section, the nonmonitor group, used it only with the compositions written at the beginning and end of the semester. The initial and final compositions were compared to see if use of the monitoring procedure throughout the course led to a greater reduction in errors on the final composition. The accuracy percentages are presented in Table 6. For articles, the percentages for both groups remained the same over time. For verbs, the nonmonitor group showed essentially no change in the percentage of correct occurrences, while the monitor group had a 6% increase. The results of a paired t-test indicate, however, that the monitor group's improvement was not statistically significant ($p < 0.1402$). When fixed expressions such as *as you know* and *I think* were not included in the correctness percentages, the difference between the two performances was closer to a significant level ($p < 0.0781$).

The findings here are consistent with those observed in two other studies that have investigated the relationship between error feedback and improvement in grammatical accuracy.

Table 6

Accuracy of Article and Verb Usage
by Group and Time

	Articles	
	Monitor Group % correct	Nonmonitor Group % correct
Time 1	87	86
Time 2	87	86
	Verbs	
	Monitor Group % correct	Nonmonitor Group % correct
Time 1	83	84
Time 2	89	83

Lalande (1982) investigated the effect of an error correction technique involving guided learning and problem solving with 60 American college students enrolled in four intermediate German classes. Half of the subjects--the experimental group--were asked to correct errors that had been located and coded and to keep track of the different types of errors made. The remaining subjects--the control group--had their errors corrected by the instructors, and no record was kept. Twelve types of grammatical and orthographic errors were examined. Although the between-group difference was significant (that is, in 11 of the 12 categories, subjects in the experimental group made significantly fewer errors than subjects in the control group), the within-group difference was not: within the experimental group, only orthographic errors realized a significant reduction from pretest to posttest.

Another study investigating the effect of different types of feedback on error correction was conducted by Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986). They contrasted four methods of providing feedback on written errors: correction of errors by the

instructor, student correction of errors that were located and coded, student correction of errors that were located but not coded, and student correction of errors that were indicated only by putting the number of errors per line in the margin. The subjects were 134 Japanese college freshman learning English in Japan. No significant differences were found among the methods. Regardless of the type of feedback, subjects wrote progressively more accurate, fluent, and complex structures.

Given that accuracy did not improve significantly over time in this study for subjects who used the monitoring procedure (that is, they did not make significantly fewer errors at the end of the semester), an analysis was done to see if their error-detecting ability, at least, did improve. Schlue (1977), in her study on oral monitoring, observed that with practice her subjects became more skilled at detecting errors.

Table 7 presents the percentage of unprompted article and verb monitorings by each group at both times. The greatest difference over time was in the monitoring of article errors by the monitor group. Further analysis revealed that this difference was due to an increase in the number of subjects monitoring and not just in the number of monitorings per subject; that is, whereas only three subjects made article monitorings in the initial composition, in the final composition eight did. The detection of article and verb errors by the nonmonitor group, on the other hand, was about the same for both the initial and the final compositions. For verbs, the monitor group again had an increase in monitoring frequency while the nonmonitor group had a decrease. Unfortunately, because of the small number of monitorings, conclusions about the effectiveness of the procedure are premature. The increases noted, however, suggest that this is an area for further research.

Table 8 presents data on the accuracy of the monitorings at the beginning and at the end of the semester. For articles, the accuracy of the monitor group's monitorings increased only very slightly while that for the nonmonitor group decreased. For verbs, the monitor group's accuracy remained about the same while that for the nonmonitor group showed a fairly substantial

increase, 12%. The nonmonitor group's greater accuracy rate may be attributed to their having made more agreement and fewer tense errors in the final composition. The greater monitoring ease of subject-verb errors most likely contributed to the increase in accuracy.

Table 7

Frequency of Unprompted Monitorings by Group and Time

	Articles			Verbs		
Monitor Group	#monitored	#errors	%monitored	#monitored	#errrors	%monitored
Time 1	3	51	6%	8	53	15%
Time 2	12	60	20%	10	40	25%
Nonmonitor Group						
Time 1	12	59	20%	18	54	33%
Time 2	8	68	18%	14	57	25%

Table 8

Accuracy of Unprompted and Prompted Monitorings by Group and Time

	Articles			Verbs		
Monitor Group	#correct	#inc /NC*	%cor.	#correct	#inc /NC*	%cor.
Time 1	40	2	91%	34	12	74%
Time 2	53	3	95%	26	10	72%
Nonmonitor Group						
Time 1	38	3	93%	29	14	67%
Time 2	55	9	86%	42	11	79%

*NC - no change was made even though it was indicated

CONCLUSION

Although limited, this investigation has provided further insight into the monitoring of grammatical errors in written production. In sum, with regard to the 31 advanced ESL learners in this study, the specific findings were as follows:

1. Twenty-five percent of the verb errors and fifteen percent of the article errors were detected and corrected by the subjects without assistance from the instructor. The different types of article errors were monitored with about the same frequency, but different types of verb errors were monitored with different frequencies.

2. About half of the unprompted monitorings occurred during the first monitoring session (that is, immediately after production).

3. Article errors were monitored accurately more frequently than verb errors. For both types of errors, the unprompted monitorings were accurate more often than the prompted monitorings.

4. Four-fifths of the subjects were able to make at least one unprompted article or verb monitoring.

5. Subjects using the monitoring procedure throughout the semester exhibited a decrease in verb errors but not in article errors. This decrease in verb errors, however, was not statistically significant. Subjects using the procedure with only the initial and final compositions showed no decrease in either type of error.

These findings indicate that while the self-monitoring of articles and verbs in written production is not easy, even for advanced students, it is possible. These findings also indicate that monitoring practice may have only a marginal effect on improving grammatical accuracy.

One practical implication of the first finding is that ESL learners should be given the opportunity to monitor their in-class writing. This would result in the instructor having to make fewer corrections later. Because students often do not budget their time in order to monitor after production, instructors need to

incorporate such time into the writing task. Following the monitoring procedure in this study, the instructor can allow time for monitoring in the class session after the composing session.

Even though monitoring practice may not lead to a statistically significant decrease in errors, the merits of the procedure are not diminished. One benefit of such an approach is that, along with the tabulation of errors, it involves learners more actively in the correction process. Learners discover by themselves the patterns in their errors. Moreover, they must determine as best they can the causes of these errors. (The learners' explanations can be most revealing, as the research on introspection has shown [Seliger, 1979; Cohen & Robbins, 1976]. Some learners have misformed rules or no rules at all for processes that are seemingly straightforward.) Second, the tallying of errors helps instructors be more consistent when marking compositions. Ineffective feedback is often due to instructors' not being systematic in the types of errors corrected (Rivers, 1968; Cohen & Robbins, 1976). The tally reminds instructors of students' recurring errors so that these can be focused on.

Although monitoring should be encouraged, it should also be relegated to the final stage of the composing process. Excessive attention to form during the writing session can eat up the time that is better spent on prewriting and the monitoring of content and organization while composing (Pianko, 1979). If students know that they will have an opportunity to correct grammatical errors later, they can attend to the task at hand while writing--getting their ideas down on paper in an organized and developed manner.

More research into the monitoring process is, of course, needed. First, the correction of a wider range of errors needs to be examined because it would be worthwhile to know which errors are most affected by the monitoring procedure. The relative seriousness of these errors also needs to be examined: are the errors most frequently monitored also the ones which are the most serious? In other words, does saliency derive more from the learnability of the rule or from the gravity of the error? This aspect of monitoring was not addressed in the

present study

Second, we need to know if the effectiveness of the monitoring procedure can be enhanced. It might be more effective if its use is limited to one "learnable" error at a time. In other words, when monitoring, subjects should focus on only one or two salient error types. Just as the detection of errors is enhanced through such focus (Knapp, 1972), so may its effectiveness be also. The monitoring procedure is also probably more effective with lower proficiency learners. Although White (1977) did not find a difference in the monitoring ability of intermediate and advanced ESL learners, the former may show a greater reduction in errors over time because of their tendency to make frequent form errors, which are more susceptible to eradication since they involve "learnable" rules.

Third, it would be interesting to compare the monitorings made in response to the three types of correction stimuli used by Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986): locating and coding errors, locating errors without coding, and indicating the number of errors in the margin line by line without coding. We need to know which errors can be detected under various conditions.

A fourth direction for further research involves investigating the monitoring of writing done outside of class. We need to know if out-of-class writing is monitored in the same ways as in-class writing or if the two types of analyses involve different strategies.

□

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APPENDIX

Article and verb error types

[Explanations are provided only where the error label is not self-explanatory.]

Error	Explanation	Example
Articles		
Improper deletion	Article needed but deleted	I like United States
Improper insertion	Article not needed but inserted	I went to the Colorado
Wrong choice	Wrong choice among the three forms *a*, *an*, and *the*	I want to go around a world before I die
Verbs		
Subject-verb disagreement	Subject and verb disagree in number	Women is treated well
Wrong tense		I take 3 courses last semester
Wrong lexical choice		I feel difficulty talking
Wrong form		It tooks three hours
Improper deletion	Verb needed but deleted	This kind of tough
Improper insertion	Verb inserted but not needed	Our system is looks like here